



Ask the Developer Vol. 9, The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom—Part 1

- This article has been translated from the original Japanese content.
- The images shown in this interview were created during development.

In this ninth volume of Ask the Developer, an interview series in which Nintendo developers convey in their own words Nintendo's thoughts about creating products and the specific points they are particular about, we're talking to developers behind the [Legend of Zelda™: Tears of the Kingdom](#) game for the [Nintendo Switch™](#) system, which launches on Friday, **May 12**.

Check out the rest of the interview:

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Part 1: What to change, and what to keep

First, could I ask you to briefly introduce yourselves?

Eiji Aonuma (referred to as Aonuma from this point on): Hello, I'm Eiji Aonuma, the producer of the [Legend of Zelda](#) series. My first role in the series was designing dungeons for *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (1). I served as the director and producer for *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* (2), and I've been the series' producer ever since.

(1) *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Released in November 1998 for [Nintendo 64™](#). It is characterized by a story that goes back and forth between Link's childhood and adulthood.

(2) *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*. In the U.S., released in November 2006 for Wii™ and December 2006 for Nintendo GameCube™. In the Twilight Realm, the world of shadow, Link transforms into a wolf.

Hidemaro Fujibayashi (referred to as Fujibayashi from this point on): Hello, I'm Hidemaro Fujibayashi, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom's* director. Continuing from *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* (3) and the previous game, *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (4), I proposed the fundamental idea of the game and directed the entire production team.

(3) [The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword](#). Released in November 2011 for the Wii system. This game featured an intuitive control system which utilized the technology of Wii Remote Plus and Wii MotionPlus accessories. A remaster of the game, *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword HD*, was released in July 2021 for Nintendo Switch.

(4) [The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild](#). Released for Nintendo Switch and Wii U in March 2017. Awakening from a 100-year slumber, the protagonist, Link, must explore and survive the vast and dangerous land of Hyrule to regain his memories. *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* is its direct sequel.

Takuhiro Dohta (referred to as Dohta from this point on): Hi, I'm Takuhiro Dohta, the technical director for this game. I've been involved in the *Legend of Zelda* series in various different roles, but *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of*

the Wild was the first time I worked on a *Legend of Zelda* game from the very start. In this title too, I was responsible for the game's overall technical direction.

Satoru Takizawa (referred to as Takizawa from this point on): Hi, I'm Satoru Takizawa, the art director for this game. I first joined the series with *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, and since then, I've been handling artwork and design for titles such as *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (5) and *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*. I've coordinated the visuals since *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.

(5) *Launched in December 2002 in Japan for Nintendo GameCube (March 2003 in the U.S.). The player controls the wind with a mysterious baton to sail across the ocean and explore the different islands.*

Hajime Wakai (referred to as Wakai from this point on): Hello, I'm Hajime Wakai, the sound director. My first involvement in the series was when I composed music for *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*. I've been involved as the sound director for the series since *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword*.

Thank you very much. Many may already be familiar, but, Aonuma-san, could you give us a brief introduction to the *Legend of Zelda* series?

Aonuma: Of course! The *Legend of Zelda* series is set in the kingdom of Hyrule, where the sacred power of goddesses resides. It is a series featuring both action and puzzle solving, in which the protagonist Link, the player's avatar, battles against Ganondorf and others who are scheming to obtain that power. In many games, Link must also help Princess Zelda who is destined to be endowed with the sacred power of goddesses. This title, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, is a direct sequel to *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, which released in 2017. Once again, it takes place in the vast land of Hyrule after the conclusion of the previous game.

So this title picks up after the events of *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.

Aonuma: Yes, this title is set in Hyrule shortly after the end of the previous game. There are many reasons why we chose this setting. After finishing development on the previous title, we wondered if we could make it possible for players to continue exploring the world after they've reached the game's ending.

The *Legend of Zelda* series seems to be one of those franchises where the visual style and game mechanics often change drastically

for each entry. Was there ever a discussion about creating a new game with a completely new world, rather than a sequel?

Aonuma: No, not really. Although the previous title, *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, has its own conclusion, we started to come up with new ideas that we wanted to bring to life in this already realized version of Hyrule, so our direction in making a sequel did not change.



Fujibayashi: Just like somewhere you know inside and out, we understand where everything is in Hyrule from *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, and because of that, we believed it was possible to create new gameplay. For this reason, in the initial proposal, we clearly stated "the setting will not change" as an important concept. Even when I shared this with the team members here, there were no objections, and we were all aligned on that idea from that point onward.

Dohita: When I was working on the programming for Wuhu Island [during *Wii Sports Resort's* development](#) (6), I remembered Miyamoto-san saying that he wanted to "turn the actual stages of games into characters." What he meant by that was to create one island and use that as a base to add various kinds of gameplay in different games. The idea of having new discoveries in the same setting was striking to me. I'd been wanting to try this idea with other titles, and I supposed this game would leverage that kind of approach.

(6) *Wii Sports Resort*. Released in June 2009 for the Wii system (July 2009 in the U.S.). Set on the tropical resort, Wuhu Island, the game offers 12 activities such as Swordplay and Air Sports.

I see. So the decision to create a sequel in the same setting was deliberate.

Dohta: In contrast, we made some fairly big changes to the gameplay. In *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword*, if players wanted to travel from the sky to the ground, they had to select it from the map, but in this game, you can dive from the sky directly to the ground without any interruption.

On top of that, players can also ride on flying vehicles and so on, offering even more freedom within the same setting as the previous game. If a location were completely unfamiliar to you, you'd probably be hesitant to dive down from the sky, but because it's a world that you've already explored in the previous game, these transportation methods make sense.

Being able to dive from the sky to the surface and into a pond seamlessly in this title sure does feel exhilarating. It truly feels like an open-air game this time around.

Dohta: Adding the ability to dive from the sky was also partly due to Aonuma-san and Fujibayashi-san's persistence, right? (Laughs)

Fujibayashi: Yeah. I've wanted to make this happen ever since *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword*. Thinking how satisfying it'd be to dive from the sky and jump directly into the water. In this title, diving is not just about enjoying an exhilarating, seamless means of travel, but it also brings more value as a tool for gathering information about the surface by surveying it from above.

That's true. It's not just a satisfying way to travel. (Laughs) So you're saying that being able to look over Hyrule from above and descend from the sky further expands the scope of the gameplay, right?

Aonuma: That's right. But when we talk about these things, many may think, "Well, you can't enjoy this game unless you've already played the previous game and are familiar with the setting." But the new gameplay ideas we packed into this title are all things that can be solved intuitively, so I think first-time players can rest assured that this game is easy to get into.

Fujibayashi: The same goes for the story too. We put in some effort to make sure that it feels comfortable for both first-time players and those with experience of the previous game. For example, we've prepared a Character Profile feature that players can see anytime during their

adventure, so it's easy to understand the relationship between characters, even without knowledge from the previous title.

On the other hand, those who have played the previous game may enjoy reading these profiles, because some of the content will make you grin and think, "Right, I remember that."



Since this is a sequel, *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* is the foundation, but I see there are also various considerations for new players as well. By the way, if you're using the same world, don't you need to put effort into creating differences in the graphics and sound?

Takizawa: I keenly felt that implementing something new into the same world was actually harder than creating something from scratch. Although it is the same world, we want to make sure players experience it with a new sense of wonder. So to achieve that, we had to take a world originally made up of things we'd designed to fit it perfectly, and then bolt a new layer of surprises on top of it, designed from a different perspective. And we had to do so without erasing the familiar world. Even though we racked our brains last time to put it all together! (Laughs) Of course from the development staff's point of view, it's definitely more fun to come up with ideas for creating new surprises, but it sure was a challenging development process.

Wakai: For the game's music, we broke the conventions of the series in the previous game and mainly used piano tones. While this title follows the

same musical direction, we grappled with how to create a sense of freshness as a sequel. The sound effects are generated by a completely new system that's different from the previous game, so even if the same sound is used, it sounds a lot more realistic in this game. For example, in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, we tried to make nearby environmental sounds, such as bird calls, sound realistic. However, with this title, the expressiveness of these sounds has improved to the point where players hear a bird call from afar and sense the distance more realistically.

So with each element that you were responsible for, you took on new challenges while working with the previous title as a framework.

Fujibayashi: What to change, and what to keep. We spent a lot of energy thinking about this.

Read more in [Part 2: Linking hands](#)

Ask the Developer Vol. 9, The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom—Part 2

- This article has been translated from the original Japanese content.
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Part 2: Linking hands

Now let's move on to the things that have changed from the previous game. Speaking of which, I immediately noticed that Link looks a little different in this title, doesn't he?

Aonuma: Yes, his right arm. We wanted an iconic feature that would make it obvious at first glance that it's the Link from this game. Speaking of Link's arm, "hands" is a major theme in this title.



"Hands"? Can you elaborate on this?

Fujibayashi: Titles in the [Legend of Zelda](#) series intertwine all the elements of gameplay, mechanics, and story, and combine them all into a single game. For this title, we chose "hands" as the key theme to bring them all together. For example, abilities that Link uses to solve puzzles are all released from his hand and arm. We even included this symbolically in the game's mechanics, such as having scenes that use hands when opening special doors. This "hands" theme also crops up here and there as a key element as the story develops.

Dohta: The previous game was a relatively lonesome game, or rather an endurance game where you made full use of Link's body and strength alone to traverse the vast world. What's unique this time is joining hands and cooperating with various characters, and at times, creating items with Link's own hands and utilizing them as you progress.

Takizawa: We were intentional about making this "hands" theme show through in the visuals as well as in the story direction. If you watch the [trailers](#) that we've released so far, I think you may be able to get a sense of this atmosphere.

Wakai: We also expressed the "hands" theme by implementing handclaps and such in the game's music.

Aonuma: Well, simply put, "hands" expresses the idea of "connecting." This applies to the story too, which connects to Hyrule's past. It also talks about a major struggle called "The Imprisoning War," which until now was considered a myth even in Hyrule.

Fujibayashi: And the protagonist's name is "Link" after all.

Aonuma: Oh... I just got the connection... (Laughs)

Everyone: (Laughs)

Aonuma: It's funny how these things work out, isn't it? You don't notice these things when you're developing the game. But then after you're done, you see that all sorts of things were actually connected. And you realize, "Oh, so that's what we were doing..." you know?

So there are certain fundamental things that you wouldn't change because it's a sequel, and it becomes a matter of creating something new within those existing boundaries. It all sounds pretty challenging.

Aonuma: We set those boundaries ourselves, but new gameplay elements are born when we break through them. So we were "breaking boundaries."

Takizawa: "Breaking boundaries." That's a good phrase!

Aonuma: Turns out that a lot of the boundaries were pretty durable. (Laughs)

Everyone: (Laughs)

Takizawa: On the other hand, the sound maintained just the right number of similarities with the previous title so that it feels like an adventure in the same world.

Wakai: Exactly. We intended to keep iconic sounds from the previous title, such as the sounds that play when you obtain an item or solve a puzzle.

Aonuma: Breaking boundaries doesn't mean you can just destroy whatever you like, though. Those boundaries give you the basis to feel safe about taking risks elsewhere.

No matter how everything else changes, when you hear those sounds, you'll think, "Oh, that's a *Legend of Zelda* game!" right?

Aonuma: That reminds me of how the word “déjà vu” cropped up many times during development. We were supposed to be making something different, but the various things we made gave off a similar impression to what we'd done previously. But as development went on, we'd look at the game as a whole and sometimes discover that those things suddenly took a different shape because of the new elements we'd added. Until then, we were anxiously trying to change things up, but at some point, we realized that some of them were already as they should be.

So there was one approach to make changes to remove that "déjà vu" feeling. And there was another to keep things the same because that's the way they should be. Was everyone on the development team on the same page from early on about those two approaches?

Fujibayashi: Not in the slightest. There were many instances, even later on in development, where we struggled to differentiate the two. It was a constant and difficult process where we and the development team continued to mull over and discuss until we all came to an agreement.

Takizawa: We often experienced strong déjà vu, particularly in the early stages, and we thought it was imperative to transform how the game felt as much as we could. We worked hard with that thought in mind, but once we got to a certain point in development, we were able to identify areas that would lose their appeal if we changed them.



Fujibayashi: We started to think positively by calling what we decided not to change "the Great Mundanity." (Laughs)

Takizawa: By the end, the definition of this "Great Mundanity" became clear, so even if a team member approached us about a déjà vu feeling, we felt more comfortable asking them to intentionally keep something unchanged.

I suppose it's like when a sense of values that isn't shared by everybody eventually clicks into place through trial and error.

Aonuma: Video game development is always like that. When various pieces come together and things start clicking into place, there's a moment when "This is fine..." becomes "This is it!"

Read more in [Part 3: A world connected all the way to the skies](#)

Ask the Developer Vol. 9, The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom—Part 3

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Part 3: A world connected all the way to the skies

I now understand the challenges and circumstances behind [*The Legend of Zelda™: Tears of the Kingdom's*](#) development. You said that the setting is the same as that of [*The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*](#). However, now that you can explore the skies above Hyrule, does this mean that the world has expanded considerably?

Fujibayashi: Yes, there are the skies and caves to explore now. These are also areas we weren't able to create in the previous title for multiple reasons.

Dohta: Actually, the previous title, *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, was originally developed for Wii U™ (7), so there were restrictions in development. There were a lot of ideas we wanted to implement during its development, but we made clear decisions on what we wouldn't do in that game. For example, we decided that it wouldn't involve flying. Then Aonuma-san kept saying, "If flying is out of the question, I want to dig underground!" And we'd respond, "Oh no! Please don't make us develop that too!" (Laughs)

(7) *Released in 2012. A home console that features games that link the screens displayed on both the TV and the handheld Wii U GamePad.*

Aonuma: It was just my natural response when playing *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Like, "Man, I want to dig a hole right here." (Laughs)

Everyone: (Laughs)

Dohta: For *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, we began by compiling and implementing ideas we couldn't include in the previous title. We wouldn't have been able to do so had we made a completely new world, so developing in the same setting as the previous game was significant in this sense as well.

Takizawa: The entrances to cliffside caves might be a good example.



Dohda: In the previous title, the cliffs could only be climbed up, and the cliffsides were bare.

Takizawa: I think that players who find a cliffside cave in this game might start wondering, "Is there one in the cliffs over there too?" When a place – even one that's already familiar – is augmented with something of worth, you begin to see the world in a different light. Even as the game's developers, we started seeing the landscape in a different way while working on the game. I believe the way players explore Hyrule will change too.

I see. It's a *Legend of Zelda* characteristic for one hint to lead to another, causing a chain reaction for players to view different places in new ways. How about the skies, then?

Fujibayashi: Although the walls in the last game gave "height," I thought the gameplay was largely two-dimensional. This time, we added "verticality" – in other words, gameplay that utilizes height. We developed a three-dimensional world under the premise that you'll be able to travel from the surface to the skies seamlessly. Link also has a new action called "dive" and a new outfit for the skies.

Thinking about how to get to the floating sky islands seems fun.

Fujibayashi: The actions you take to get there and the exploration of the sky islands themselves are both a lot of fun. The new actions and sky area

were such novelties to us that we added one sky island after another to test out the different gameplay elements. Then one day, the designers scolded us. They said we'd made the skies messy by adding too many islands. (Laughs)



Takizawa: It was pretty cluttered... (Laughs)

Aonuma: When we placed the islands to scale in the skies, I was surprised to see just how small they were when looking up at them from the ground.

Dohata: As with the previous title, we ensured that everything connected seamlessly. Things like houses were built to scale, and even if you enter a house, there's no map transition. From the windows, you can see the outside exactly the way you did before entering the house. Everything looks just as it should. But when we created the skies to scale on a seamless map and added features like floating stepping stones, they appeared too small from the ground and only looked like loose specks of trash. (Laughs) In the end, the designers did a great job adjusting their appearance.



Wakai: Connecting the ground and the skies seamlessly also presented difficulties from a sound perspective.

Dohta: Yes, the sound staff often pressed the programmers to clarify where the dividing line between the surface and the skies was.

Wakai: Sound transitions are done seamlessly as well, but the background music in particular needed to change according to the situation. Because of this, we need to place transition triggers to indicate where the music should switch.

Dohta: I'd never needed to consider where the sky begins before, so I had to think about it. (Laughs)

Everyone: (Laughs)

Wakai: Also, it was difficult to find a fitting sound for the sky.

Takizawa: I guess it's because the sky is a scene we've all only ever witnessed from inside an airplane, right?

Wakai: Exactly. I knew what "flying in the sky" sounded like, but the request was for an "island in the sky." (Laughs)

Aonuma: After all, no one has ever been to an island in the sky.

We've only discussed the skies, but this title has its dungeons too, right?

Fujibayashi: Yes, we haven't talked about the dungeons yet. They've changed from the previous game. For example, there is a dungeon that connects directly from Hyrule's surface. If you dive from the sky straight into the dungeon, you'll trigger an event. We think this will be a new experience that wasn't possible in the previous game.

Dohta: We've made dungeons unique to their respective environments, so we think you'll be able to enjoy the wide variety of regional characteristics.

Takizawa: Making a "wide variety" was pretty challenging. The four Divine Beasts were the dungeons in the last game, and they shared similar designs. This time, the dungeons are huge and each carry their own regional look and feel, just like traditional *The Legend of Zelda* games. We think they will provide a satisfying challenge for players. They were certainly a challenge to develop! (Laughs)

Read more in [Part 4: What makes the game "The Legend of Zelda-like"](#)

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Part 4: What makes the game “The Legend of Zelda-like”

I know that "breaking the conventions of [The Legend of Zelda™](#)" was the theme behind the previous title. However, it seems that "breaking the conventions of sequels" was the concept for this title because it's filled with many new elements despite being a sequel.

Dohta: Yes, that's right. As we were having this discussion, I was thinking that if we had created the game from scratch in a completely different world, we might have ended up with something with a similar gameplay feel to the last one, just with a different map.

Fujibayashi: I think he has a point. We often say that we should “create games through multiplication. ”For example, we believe that taking the main character's ability and multiplying it with a world that has a lot to offer will result in a different experience for every player, every time. For the sequel, as we wanted to keep offering a different experience every time, without changing the world that has a lot to offer, it was only natural for us to change the main character's ability and create something new. That's why we completely redesigned Link's abilities.

Link's abilities shown in [Aonuma-san's recent gameplay video](#) were completely new and different from those of the last game. But when you say they have been completely redesigned, do you mean all his abilities are different?

Aonuma: Yes, they are all new. You'd be wrong if you thought the abilities were the same as before. (Laughs) In particular, one of the things that sets this title apart, the fun of attaching objects to each other, was something that Fujibayashi-san brought up in the early stages of development, saying, “This is the gameplay I want to implement in the sequel!”

Fujibayashi: Back then, I tried creating vehicles using only the mechanisms and parts available in the previous game and presented them.

For instance, I used spinning cog wheels as tires and attached four of them to a board to create a car. I also made a paddle steamer by attaching boards to those self-rotating cog wheels. By assembling stone slabs into a gun barrel and using a Remote Bomb, I also created a cannon that shoots Ancient Spheres. I attached it to a car to create a tank. (Laughs) By showing these ideas, I proposed that if Link had the ability to attach things together, we could create this new kind of gameplay using materials we already had

available. This was how we came up with the idea of creating vehicles with the Ultrahand ability in this title.

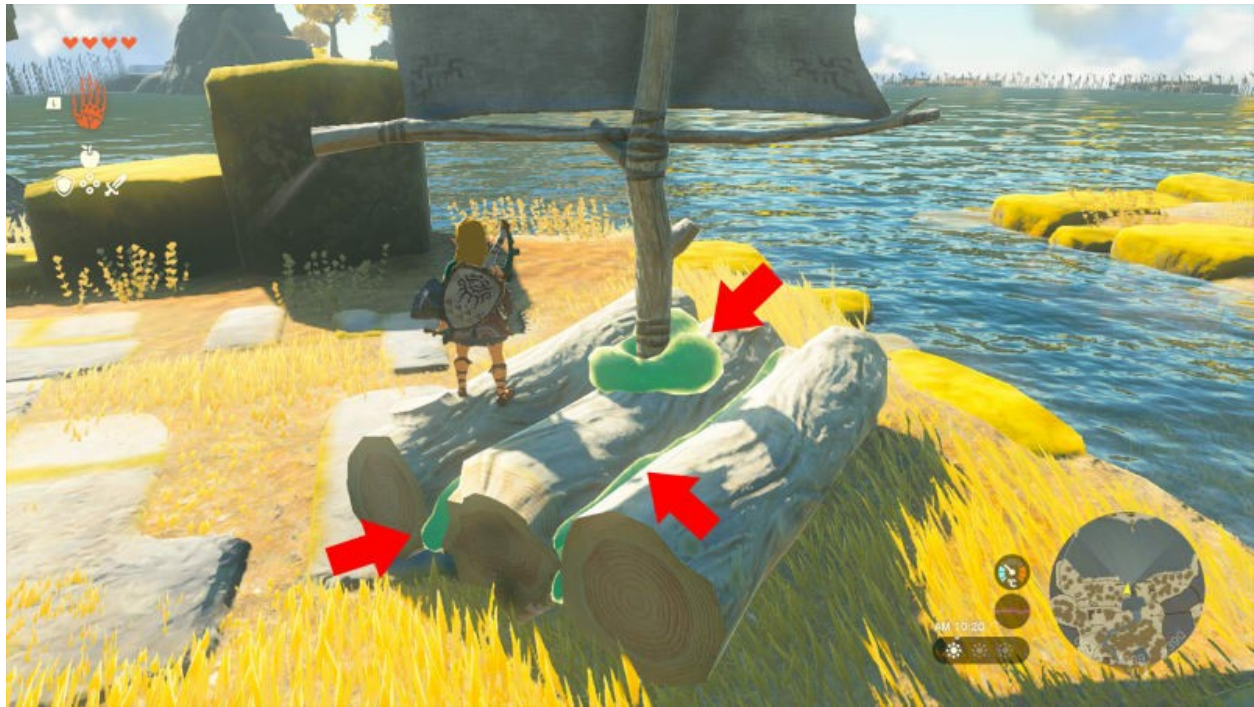
I see, so the idea of attaching objects together to create something was present from the early stages of development. Watching Aonuma-san's gameplay video, it was intuitive and easy to understand what you can do by attaching things.

Dohata: The object-to-object combinations are something our designers and programmers put a lot of effort into adjusting because of the sheer number of variations. I want players to experiment with lots of combinations and find their favorite.

Takizawa: Not only can you attach objects with the Ultrahand ability, but you can also build weapons with the Fuse ability, so the variety of combinations is truly massive. Our staff worked hard to make special adjustments to each item to ensure players wouldn't be disappointed and think, "This isn't what I expected..." Thanks to their efforts, we developed lots of attractive weapons that could be created with the Fuse ability. You can create a spear that looks like the Grim Reaper's scythe, for example.



Aonuma: But you see what looks like glue bulging out in between the attached objects, right? At first, I was shocked and thought, "What?! Are we really going with this?" (Laughs)



Takizawa: Did I just get called out...?! (Laughs) But I'm pretty sure that was the most obvious way to express whether the objects are attached or not. I'm quite confident of that. (Laughs)

Wakai: That expression of glue-like substances was also perfect from a sound design perspective because it was easy to translate into sound in real life. So for that, I'm very thankful. Rather than unrealistic, abstract sounds, "unrefined sounds" that give players a more realistic sense of texture and accomplishment often feel right for *Legend of Zelda* games. As this game involves repeatedly attaching and detaching objects, we needed to develop a sound effect that informs players that an object is now ready to be attached. So regardless of what objects you're sticking together, you'll always hear the same "attaching sound." Since it's a sound that you will hear over and over again, we thought the key was to create something that would give players a feeling of accomplishment so that they could genuinely enjoy the process.



Fujibayashi: Once we decided on the look and added sound effects, I felt a sense of achievement the moment the objects were attached, and it was very satisfying.

Aonuma: Yeah, whatever you make, you end up feeling good about it.

Dohata: We originally wanted to implement this gameplay so people could enjoy simply attaching things rather than building something substantial. It's like, "I attached tires to a log, and it moved forward! I know it looks a bit lame, but that's fine!" – that kind of feeling. In that sense, I think the glue symbolizes the fun of sticking things together. Even if you randomly stick things together, you'll still end up with something with a nice handmade feel. (Laughs)

Aonuma: Yes, so don't worry if you're not good at making things. If you attach two long things together, you can create something even longer. It's as simple as that. Though it may look odd, that makes total sense, because they're stuck together with glue. (Laughs) I think this is very *Legend of Zelda*-like, and I'm liking it.

Takizawa: But Aonuma-san, you were making a solid raft in that gameplay video, shaping it stylishly. (Laughs) You'll pass through that place early in the game, but you don't need to make such a solid raft to cross. If you want, you can cross without building a raft.

Aonuma: I know, but the purpose of that video was to show what's special about the game. I wanted to give players a clear example. (Laughs) I mean, who wouldn't want to cross a river on a self-made raft?!

Everyone: (Laughs)

Takizawa: Indeed, watching the development staff doing test plays, some people created very elaborate inventions, while others focused on efficiency and only used the bare necessities. It's interesting how a person's playstyle can say a lot about their personality.

Aonuma: I feel that designers, in particular, tend to create intricate inventions.

Dohta: By placing the "attaching" feature at the center of the gameplay, I think we have created a mechanism that meets the needs of both those who want to create something elaborate and those who only want to do the bare minimum needed in order to progress.

Fujibayashi: We were very conscious of finding the right balance.

It's nice that players can enjoy creating something elaborate, while those who just want to keep moving forward in the game don't have to think too hard, so people can enjoy the game in their own way.

Dohta: In terms of features, one of the things we ended up not including in the last game was "magic." Previously, we had a Stamina Wheel for physical actions, but there was nothing equivalent to a "magic gauge." This time, however, we wanted to incorporate that feature, so we added another unique ability: the magical Zonai Devices. As you can see in Aonuma-san's gameplay demonstration video, you can generate wind or move objects with a Zonai Device. Using this power, for example, you can even create something absurd, such as an "omni-directional flamethrower." There are many moments where you can cheat in a good way.

Aonuma: Well, you say magic gauge - its visual is actually a battery. (Laughs)



Everyone: (Laughs)

Takizawa: The initial concept of this game was to use the "supernatural power" of an unknown civilization, as opposed to the Sheikah civilization's "super ancient technology" in the previous game, so we decided to create lots of handy items with magical properties. However, even if we describe these items as "supernatural," players won't use them unless they know what they are. So, this thing we were calling "magic" ultimately became...ahem, an electric fan.



Everyone: (Laughs)

Takizawa: Since we felt it was important for our players to get what those items are at a glance, our designers ended up creating various home appliances. (Laughs) Coming up with ways to present them as something supernatural in the world of [*The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*](#) was quite a challenge. It was a great opportunity for us designers to put our skills to the test. (Laughs)

Aonuma: If players are shown something they've never seen in real life, they'll have no idea how to use it. But if it looks similar to an everyday item, they'll understand how it should be used intuitively. Having these items in the world of this *Legend of Zelda* game where magic exists surprisingly worked.

I see how the fun of sticking things together and magic have both been expressed in a slightly comical manner, typical of the *Legend of Zelda* series, so that players understand how they work intuitively.

Read more in [Part 5: If players think they can do it, they can!](#)

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Part 5: If players think they can do it, they can!

You mentioned that every player will have a different experience with this game. However, given this degree of freedom, some of the abilities may be used in ways contrary to the developers' intentions. Do you have any concerns about that?

Fujibayashi: I wouldn't worry too much about that. The programmers have made sure these features won't cause issues on the system side, and the gameplay is designed so that players can freely create whatever comes to mind, just like an experiment. We'd rather our players surprise us by creating something we've never even thought of.

Dohta: This can also be said for the previous title, but we've placed more importance on creating a game that enables players to do exactly what they think they can do, rather than how we want them to play the game.

Fujibayashi: Because once we define how we want players to play the game, it ends up becoming more and more linear. We once had a place with

stacks of crates that couldn't be moved, but we decided to make them movable because we knew our players would definitely be disappointed if they couldn't move them. Since then, for any objects we don't want players to move, our designers have put ropes around them or covered them with a cloth to symbolize that they can't be moved. A lot of attention has been given to details like these.



Dohta: By the way, we've placed a lid on every single unbreakable jar. (Laughs) The more you play a game, the faster your brain processes it, so after a while, your brain starts to automatically sort out what's an enemy, what not to touch, and what to take. For parts of the game that require players to look and make decisions, our designers did a good job creating rules and signs, so I think players will understand what they should do intuitively, even without any explanation.

You mentioned that you worked on this game from the perspective of enabling players to do exactly what they think they can do. I recall players of the previous title playing in lots of different ways. Do you ever watch fan-made gameplay videos?

Aonuma: There was some talk about them among the development team. The direction of giving players the freedom to do anything in this game came about precisely because of the reactions of people who played the last game.

Takizawa: Even though it's been six years since the last title was released, many fans still post drawings, comments and videos on social media. Especially when the team is facing difficulties during development, these things light up the eyes of our staff and make them think, "Alright, let's show 'em what we've got!" I really want to thank all our fans.

Fujibayashi: I totally agree. Our fans have motivated us so much in the development of this game. Thank you so much!

Everyone: (Gives a big nod)

Aonuma: I've seen some fans say that the [*Legend of Zelda*[™]](#) games make them feel like they're the only player to have solved the puzzle, and that's what they like about the series. I think letting players come up with their own solutions to puzzles gives them a stronger sense of being the only one to have figured them out than if we got them to use pre-defined solutions. In a sense, this is something unique to the *Legend of Zelda* series, and I think it's something that's brought out even more in this title.



Thank you very much. I feel your passion for the development of not just this title but also the series in general. Now, to wrap up the interview, could you tell us what you want players to pay close attention to and what you've particularly focused on in this game?

Wakai: For me it's the expression of realism in the game. For example, the sense of distance created as a player moves away from a nearby sound and

it becomes increasingly hazy and echoey, disappearing into other ambient sounds. Ever since the previous title, we've been developing our games to provide a surround-sound experience, and you can enjoy it with headphones or stereo speakers. We hope you'll notice these details. I heard some of our development staff saying, "Just chilling by the sea makes me feel relaxed... I wish I could listen to that sound forever..." (Laughs) We hope you'll have fun playing around and finding your own way to enjoy the game's sound, like in this example.

Takizawa: As for the design and art for the core elements of this title, such as the new civilization, the motifs have been completely redesigned from those of the previous title, which were inspired by ancient Japanese culture. At the same time, all our designers have focused on once again building completely original, supernatural imagery, while creating a mysterious atmosphere that's existed in Japan since ancient times. We'd like you to take time to enjoy your adventure in this new and different world that's filled with this somewhat mysterious yet refreshing energy. And please look forward to a Hyrule that's both familiar and changed since the previous game, including its expanded new world. Also, don't forget to check out new characters and enemies, as well as how familiar faces have changed and grown. We hope you'll enjoy interacting with various elements created around the theme of "hands" that we discussed earlier in the interview.

Dohata: As was the case with the previous game, the best-case scenario would be for players to start playing at the same time, and when they get together later, they realize that they don't know what each other is talking about because each of them is experiencing something completely different. Even though they're enjoying the same game, they're taking different routes, doing different things in their own ways, and when they ask each other how far they've gotten, each learns for the first time about what the other is playing. I hope there'll be conversations between players like, "I never knew there was such a thing!" or "I didn't know there was such a place!" again in this title.

Fujibayashi: In the early stages of development on this title, we received comments from fans saying that they wished they could forget everything about [*The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*](#) and play it for the first time again. The feeling you get when the game starts and the world opens up, the moment you're about to embark on an epic adventure, the encounters with powerful enemies, and the excitement when you reach the ending. In [*The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*](#), we've tried our best to ensure players can experience those feelings as much as or more than in previous titles.

I'm confident fans will recapture that same feeling, and hope you'll look forward to that.

Last but not least, Aonuma-san, do you have any comments for the fans?

Aonuma: I wonder how many times I've played the game to debug (8) it... I've played this game from start to finish about 20 times, and I can say that it's more fun with detours, even more so than in the previous game. When testing the game, I sometimes needed to rush ahead to clear the story, but later on, as I started to go off on side paths, I realized... it's a whole different game! (Laughs) Some discoveries made me think, "Wow, you can even do this at this point in the game?" Even when sticking things together, there are so many different combinations that even I don't know all of them. I even discovered something new the other day while shooting the gameplay demonstration video. So, it may take some time, but as you take detours and try out whatever you can at the time, I think you'll be able to enjoy the game in your very own way. So don't head straight for the ending! (Laughs) I've cleared the game many times myself and never felt bored once. You have my word!

(8) The process of playing in-development games for quality assurance and investigating issues with programs.

I look forward to discovering lots of new things in the further expanded land of Hyrule. Thank you very much.